1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

any, and then begins to prepare a meal. Within the local lineage these visits are frequent, especially during festivals.

Rice and money are borrowed—always without interest—within the local lineage, though there are cases in which help is denied. Occasionally members may contribute funds so that a young member may obtain an education; however, prior to this century education was extremely rare among the southern Santal, among whom missionary efforts were not nearly so intense as among the northern Santal.

Though an entire local lineage is not likely to reside in a single village, the members inevitably live near one another. Typically, the founders of a village are members of a single local lineage. Members of this founding lineage thus tend to have more and superior land than later immigrants. In most instances the chief offices of the village, i.e., "village headman" and "village priest" belong to the founding lineage. The rule of primogeniture obtains, though upon the death of any officer the villagers must accede in the choice of a new officer. To what degree the villagers may in fact determine who shall fill the position is not clear, though there are cases in which an older son of a deceased headman or priest was passed over in favor of a younger son on the basis of alleged incompetence. Although the village must give its assent in selecting leaders—and to the decisions of leaders as well, since there is nothing more than the consent of the governed to support such decisions—important control of village affairs does lie within the control of the founding local lineage through its control of offices, superior wealth, and prestige.

In the traditional system, disputes within a village are brought to the attention of the headman by the contending parties. He may suggest some compromise if it is not a question

2; Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

597 his, then the sons of the adopting man get this property or that of his wife. But the
428 cousins of the adopted man get nothing. That is to say, the sons of the adopting man will have the responsibility for the expenses with the final funeral ceremonies and so on. And if he has children, it naturally belongs to them. And when any married people have no children, they may take children of both sides, i. e., children of the wife's brothers, or children of her younger sister, children of the husband's younger or elder brothers, take them to themselves as adopted ones, to be supported by them until death. These adopted ones also, in the same way, get their share of the agricultural lands, if children of the adopting pair have been born. And if they have got no children, all property will naturally belong to the adopted son. Mostly such childless people take in sons as adopted ones.

[178] Now and then they have taken in real adopted ones. When formerly — it is now some three scores of years ago — there was an insurrection, then they adopted many. At the present time they also now and then adopt. Nowadays, since the European missionaries
597 have come, these show mercy to orphans. Rather, these European teachers are like claimants
797 following up and finding their rice-lands and other lands. This is a righteous act much greater than everything else they do. They are teaching them knowledge at their own expense. They do not seek to be supported until death like us; they are rather themselves supporting others.

c. Wife's children taken in.

428 When a man takes a second wife, and she brings with her children, viz., of her former
587 husband, we call such children saṅgha lọṭọm (taken in by wife's second marriage). If they are boys, these children have no right to get the stepfather's agricultural lands and so on. But the stepfather will with pleasure procure land and a homestead field for such a one from the village headman, giving money of his own household as salami. And when the remarried woman has any earnings of her own, these belong to the children she has brought with her. But for keeping it in safe custody, she will give the uterine brothers a portion; otherwise they have no right to it.

d. Taking possession on settling.

421 If any one after having done some planting of trees runs away, and the headman of that village settles a man who has come running there, in the run-away man's agricultural land and homestead field, then if there are Mahua trees or water-reservoirs, etc., in that homestead field or in the village street outside the house or in the unit of land, the new settler gets all, including these. Even if there are heirs of the run-away man in this village, they cannot lay claim to the things mentioned, because the new man has taken possession on settling. And even if the run-away man should sometime return to this village, he will not get these trees or water-reservoirs, etc., even if he lays claim to them at the landlord's door, because that man has taken possession on settling.

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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to be the most prominent. Any one glancing through a Santali dictionary will be struck with the vocabulary bodily assimilated by the Santals from the current dialects of Bengal, and any one listening even to their folk-songs will notice that a large number of them are really in Bengali. We marked it even in the heart of Santalia, the Santal Parganas, when we heard a Santal woman humming, "Panch takar ghati bati chore laia gela" (*My pots and bowls worth rupees five have been stolen by thieves.*)[1]

Santali itself is a peculiarly expressive language so far as natural objects and things concerning the common life of agriculturists. But when it comes to the expression of things spiritual or the common ideas of modern civilization, it has got to fall back on the speech of the neighbours.

It is not, however, a written language and their traditional legends are orally handed down. The question of a Santal script engaged the attention of the early European Missionaries and they used the Roman script. It is due to their efforts that a large number of books have been written in the Roman script and the education imparted to Santals in the

1 The missionary in charge of the Dharampur district (S. P.) tells a story that while he was there with his wife, a Santal tried to explain that it was useless for them to teach Santali, as they knew the language well enough and pressed for Bengali or Hindi. (*Annual Report of the Santal Mission of Northern Churches* 1934).

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Social Environment

In the Santal tracts mentioned above, they live side by side with the general population and although Santal hamlets are separate affairs, they cannot be said to be cut off from the rest of the world. The times are gone when the Santals receded into the back-woods to live in their old world of songs, dances and drinks. The most potent of the outside influences is the Christian missionary. Throughout the Santal Parganas and other places these missions are scattered. They educate the Santal in rudiments of modern knowledge, treat him, when ill, in hospitals of their own and look after the lepers in leper colonies. The Missionaries confess that they are out to preach and teach the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ, but the indirect result of their educational activities can easily be seen in a changed angle of vision in the tribe.

Secondly, in some places, notably in Rajmahal and Dinajpur, Hindu Missions have opened their branches. These organisations seek to 'reclaim' the aboriginal to the Hindu fold, acting on the theory that the Santals are already Hindus as they follow a religion of Hindusthan. The religious workers of these institutions, who style themselves as "Missionaries,"—a novel feature no doubt—try to infuse into the Santal ideals of clean living, eating pure food and thus gradually win them over to worship the Hindu

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

gods and call themselves Hindus. We, for our part, have seen many of these reclaimed Santals, (and it was claimed by the authorities of the Hindu Mission that they succeeded in reclaiming a lakh of people within a short time in the Santal Parganas)... a procession of white-robed Santals wearing Hindu dresses, carrying tall sticks and anointed with sandal-pastes. Some of them carried drums and flutes while going to offer pujas to the Goddess Durga, cheek by jowl with the Hindus.[1]

For our part, we think that the task of the Hindu Mission is an easier one when we remember that 186,499 persons were found to be Hindu Santals in Bihar and Orissa in the census report of 1931, and in the Mayurbhanj State 254,596 persons returned themselves as Hindu Santals in the last census. It is also worthy of note that the Mayurbhanj State has always shown eagerness to extend to the Santals all privileges open to others. Cow-killing is prohibited within the State, and how far Hindu ideas have penetrated into Santal society will be apparent even to a casual observer.

Added to these, it must be remembered that the Santals do not live in water-tight compartments of their own, although their hamlets are separate from the rest. The Hindu "Kamar" does work for them,

1 The Hindu Mission in Bihar and Orissa came into existence in 1925.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

871 1924-25 to 8,473 in 1938-39; i.e. on an average
162 it doubled in course of 15 years.

871 Although in all areas the progress was not the
162 same (in the Santal Parganas during this period the
184 number of pupils under instruction rose very slightly viz. 1428), there was an awareness of the position as evidenced by the fact that the Santal Parganas Enquiry Committee reviewing the position *vis-a-vis* Santal education began their work with the proposition, "The first essential of the aboriginal is more education" and lamented that there was not a single school for the 60,000 Paharias in the Damin Hills.

871 The British government did not neglect abori-
648 ginal education but they had no visible plan of
797 their own. This task was urgently taken up by
177 the missionaries, who along with their hospitals and social service units, ran aboriginal schools of their own. As a result of their social and spiritual programme, a very large number of these tribals were converted to Christianity which meant a change lock, stock and barrel, of aboriginal sets of values. Their souls were sought to be saved. But out emerged a type of English educated people who
[539] like our young Michael Madhusudan Dutta might have exclaimed in rapture:

> Long sunk in superstition's night
> By Sin and Satan driven,

Bt Mukherjee O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

I saw not—cared not for the light,
That leads the blind to heaven.

Such a disillusionment perhaps lay in the subconscious mind of an educated Santal lad of Mayurbhanj, who asked us pathetically, "Please tell me if we have any religion."

This should be studied in the background of deeper moorings in the heart of the Santals as a result of centuries of culture-contact with the rest of the population, mostly Hindus. We have already seen that these tribals have mostly lived not in watertight compartments, but cheek by jowl with the rest of the more civilised people of India. So slowly and imperceptibly, acculturation has been going on.

One carefully traversing through the Santal myths and tradition comes to the inevitable conclusion that for ages and ages they have tried to form a part of the Hindu society. Use of vermilion during marriage, wearing of *alta* marks on the feet of women, characterising the Supreme deity as Thakur Jiu, observance of festivals like Charak (Pata—the hook-swinging festival), the strange resemblance of some Santal dances with the *Rasa* dance as described in the Vishnu Purana, the singing of essentially Vaishnava songs during the *Sohrae*, the shouting of *Haribol* during marriage, funeral and other ceremonies, the worship of Durga in Mohul-

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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bani, Bara Palassy and Pipra areas of Santal Parganas, the special puja to Kali in the Dumka Subdivision, the assemblage *en masse* of the Santals in the past to sing and dance during Hindu festivals, have very deep implications that these are broad-based on a synthesis peculiar to Indian culture.

The infiltration made itself positively felt in the Santal Parganas in 1871, with variants repeated in 1942, when many Santals declared themselves as *Safa-hor* (the pure men) after eschewing fowls, pigs, and intoxicating liquor but taking to *Ganja* (hemp, *Canabis Sativa*) and tried to bring it on a line with Hindu practices. It led for a time to some social ferment and had also political repercussions. This impact may be corroborated by a reference to the Census Report of 1931, when 586,499 Santals declared themselves as Hindus in Bihar and Orissa; and in the state of Mayurbhanj, 154,596 were returned as such. Added to these, there were movements for reclamation of the Santal to the Hindu fold, specially in Rajmahal, Balurghat and other areas. In 1936, it was claimed in the Santal Parganas, that due to their very recent activities (of the Hindu Mission), about a lakh of Santals came to the Hindu fold. In those times, we have seen, the Santals came to the Durgasthan at Dumka, to worship the goddess in their own rights as Hindus. They would recall that in their traditions and insti-

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Hindi word Nayak or leader, a term often used in the old Hindu army for lieutenants. Rai Bahadur Roy shows the Birhor Naya in a plate as Raja or chief[1]. Similarly, the word Pahan may be equated with the Hindi Pradhan or chief. These indicate the power of the religious functionary in the state. It cannot be said, at least from the study of the Chota-Nagpur tribes as well as those of Assam, that the medicine-man developed into the king, for in both the areas we find the temporal chief superior in authority to the ecclesiatic functionary. But the terms themselves show that the religious functionary is given a considerable recognition in temporal status. It is possible Hindu missionaries in bygone days might have exercised temporal and spiritual authority from which these tribes again recovered, re-establishing their own indigenous superiority of their secular chief or headman.

The term for the spirit-doctor with second sight is Mati among most of the primitive tribes of Chota-Nagpur. The Mundas, the Birhors and the Oraons all call their spirit-doctor Mati, the Hos of Seraikella call him Ojha[2]. The Santal term Ojha has rightly been objected to by Rev. P.O. Bodding as a Hindi loan word derived from Upadhyaya[3]. But we think he goes too far when he says that the whole system of Ojhaism is derived from the Hindus. Similar practices in Hindu society may be sometimes detected in the lowest stratum and also under even the mystic Tantric ritual. They

[1] S.C. Roy's The Birhor, p. 340, Plate XXVIII.
[2] A Chatterjee and T. Das, Hos. of Seraikella, part I p. 28.
[3] Rev. P.O. Bodding, Studies in Santal disease and Connected Folklore, part I.

41 Biswas D, Σ-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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CHAPTER VII

Culture Contact

177 [128] In the concluding chapter I would like to assess the effect of the impact of alien cultures on the life and customs of the Santals of Santal Parganas.

175 648 The Santals according to O'Malley[1] came from Birbhum and first settled in the Santal Parganas between 1790 and 1810. Outside Santal Parganas the Santals had contact with the Hindus but this contact [186] was not very pleasant. They were oppressed by the Zamindars and Mahajans to such an extent that even now they call such non-Santals as "Diku" (those who trouble them). In the Santal Parganas also they were oppressed by the Zamindars and Mahajans, and when this oppression was unbearable in 1855 they became rebellious. After the rebellion the Government declared it as a restricted area. No body without the permission could enter the area. From this it appears that the contact 175 177 of the Santals with the Hindus in the Santal Parganas 648 in the beginning was not cordial. Naturally the Santals at that time could not have borrowed much culturally from the Hindus. They rather tried to stick to their old customs which would preserve their entity and maintain unity in their rank.

175 177 999 **Alien Religious Movements and their effect on the Santal religion**: From the earliest records it appears that not much Hindu influence operated in the Santal Parganas to convert them, except for the Kharwar

1. Bengal District Gazetteers (Santal Parganas).

4; Biswas D, F.-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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movement which had some tinge of Hinduism. This movement was started in 1871. The leader of this movement was known as Bhagrit of Taldiha and a title of *'babaji'* was added to his name. The word *'babaji'* is a Hindu word and so it seems that it was taken from the Hindus. Later on he was arrested and imprisoned and for the time being this movement was suppressed. Again in 1880 it was revived by one Dubia Gosain who came from the vicinity of Deoghar. His activities were more pro-Hindu. Several Hindu practices were introduced by this movement and one distinguishing feature was the worship of the *'babaji'* in the manner of reverence paid to the Sanyasis by the Hindus. The religious side of the movement had a colouring of Hinduism. The *'babaji'* smeared his body with ashes, took ganja and kept long hair and worshipped Mahadeo (Siva).

It is probable that due to this Kharwar movement the Santals have introduced some Hindu deities—Kalimata, Lakhmi mai, (goddess of wealth) Parvati, Mahadeo etc. in their pantheon of *Bongas*. The Santals have belief in Rama and Krishna, the Hindu Avtars.

The word Thakur is sometimes used by them in place of their High God Cando. The word Thakur is of Sanskrit origin and the Hindus use this name for gods in general.

Some of the festivals of the Santals have Hindu counter parts. The Pata Parab of the Santals is the imitation of the Hindu festival "Charak Puja". In this puja the Hindus worship Siva (Mahadeo). The Santal Sankrat festival is equivalent to the Hindu Pous

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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elements have doubtless modified its practice among the Santals

Christian influence. In 1862 the Church missionary society started work in the Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal subdivisions and they built a colony for their converts in the Western Duars (in Godda). The Scandinavian Mission started their missionary activities in the Dumka subdivision in 1867. In 1884 the American Methodist Episcopal Mission started work in the Pakur subdivision. Other missions were the Christian Women's Board of Missions, a Wesleyan mission, which started work at Deoghar subdivision.

Thus it can be seen that after the Santal rebellion several Christian missions started their activities in and outside the Santal Parganas. It is stated in the Seventy fifth annual report of the Santal mission of Northern Churches (1941) that 25,000 Santals were converted. The record of missionaries has been a very creditable one in some respects, particularly in regard to education, sanitation, medical care and general raising of the standard of living, but in context of religion the missionary zeal has been somewhat misdirected. These converts are cut off from any activity that savours of worship of tribal *Bongas*. They do not contribute in cash or in kind to the offerings associated with village festivals. They do not take part in the worship of the five deities of the Jahersthan.

The converted Santals and even some non-Santals refer to Adam and Eve as *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Burhi* who according to the tradition of the tribal Santals are the parents of mankind and the human race

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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797 797 177 sprang from this pair. Also they correlate *Maran Buru* with 'Satan'. They believe that *Maran Buru* spoiled the first human pair and revealed to them the secret of sexual intercourse, just like the Christian who believe that Satan is responsible for the downfall of the first pair, [796] Adam and Eve. The converted Santals observe the Christmas Day and Good Friday. Harvest Festivals are celebrated by decorating Churches and offering prayers.

795 797 177 [181] [184] **Effect on the Social Culture of the Santals due to alien influence.** The social system of the Santal is communistic in nature. In any festival, or ceremony the whole village takes part. This cohesion is now losing its strength. For this, missionary activities are to a certain extent responsible. The Christian converts are being cut off from social intercourse. Sometime a christian family is put to great inconvenience. This is particularly [764] the case when a death occurs for the non-christians will have nothing whatever to do with the disposal of the dead body. The non-christian method of disposing the dead body is by cremation whereas the converted Santals practise burial and subsequent mourning and funeral ceremonies according to the Christian way. There is [582] no bar to marrying more than one wife in Santal tribal custom. But this practice is strictly prohibited among Christian Santals as Christian religion strictly prohibits *bigamy*. Cross cousin marriage, and marriage with non-Santals is not tolerated by the tribal Santals but among Christian Santals, these things are not prohibited.

[585] The marriage ceremony is held either in the Church or in the courtyards of the house of the bride's parents

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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and it is conducted according to the provision of the Indian Christian Marriage Act.

Material Culture. Material culture of the Santals of the Santal parganas has not much changed. They now wear cotton dhuties, shirts and gangees and the women have accepted cotton saris which are used by the Hindus. The well-to-do Christian Santals wear European dress, *i.e.* coats, pants, shirts, socks and shoes. The christian women wear Saris, blouses and petti coat according to the Hindu style.

Some of the younger men and women of the Christian community go out for employment in the towns and cities and when they come back they display their superior material culture, such as fountain pen, wristwatches and other luxury goods.

Rice beer is their important drink but the Christian missionaries make propaganda in favour of total abstinence, and the Christian Santals are gradually giving up this habit and tea is being substituted for it. Machine made cigarettes are slowly coming into use.

In the preparation of rice it seems they have copied something from the Bengali Hindus. The Santals like the Bengalis use boiled rice for their food and unboiled rice for offering to their tribal deities.

The indigenous husking machine of the Santals is mortar and pestle, but they also use husking lever (dhenki) in husking rice which they have copied from their Hindu neighbours.

The Santals, when they speak among themselves, use their own language. But with the 'Dikhus' in the Santal Parganas they speak in broken Hindi and

4; Biswas D, F-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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place. It is not proper to say that the traditional culture of the Santal in the Santal Parganas has undergone transformation by coming in contact with the Hindus, whereas Christinity has affected a major change by imposing on the Santals its particular way of life. The drastic interference of the Christian missioneries on traditional culture of the Santals, has destroyed tribal solidarity and forbidden the joys, recreation feasting and romance of communal life.

In trying to solve the problem of poverty and material inadequacy, the missionary has confused the issue. To believe that material prosperity is only co-existent with a change of religion and not with an indigenous religious pattern, is to betray dogmatic creed. Thus from a concern for the plight of the body, the missionary became a champion of the fate of the soul of these people. Two decisive drawbacks are manifest in the pursuit of such an ideology. Firstly, the tribal Santals tend to confuse the casual material prosperity of the missionary converts, as the direct fruits of change of religion, and quite often such gains are incongruous to them in context of their surroundings. Thus they are dubious of accepting a new religion, even formally, since its gains do not suit them. Secondly, they ill-comprehend the philosophy of an alien creed, and at best becomes a poor convert, clinging to the mere image of the structure of new ideology. In this respect they are worse off than their non-converted, who at least have the full solace of their belief in their own tribal gods and who are convicted[1] of their power and interest in them.

1 [Erratum: this should read "convinced." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

4; Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
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797 177 Further, most of Santals who actively seek the new folds, are either those who are feeling[1] from persecution of their fellow-men for irregularities like forbidden marriages etc. or those who are in dire economic distress, and who hope to gain employment and protection thereby. This creates an unhealthy [578] rivalry among the groups and upsets the balance of 797 177 their tribal society. Though there is no formal out- 578 casting or persecution of the converted tribals, there 184 yet exists a strained atmosphere created by the elimination of the common platform of tribals activity. Participation by converts in all ceremonials and rituals on marriage, birth, death etc. is not possible, and this is creating a separative tendency, tending the promotion of division among the group on economic, cultural and social levels. The tribal solidarity is broken and the group as a whole suffers from such fission.

1 [Erratum: this should read "fleeing." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

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/Information on the "Santal Christian Community" has been filed in category 794./

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the food of the *Turuk*, rice or other food, the spirits will run away. If anyone has fever or if we want to exorcize a spirit, we try to give him curds made by a *Turuk* to eat. They say that in olden times one Mirza Turuk drove us from the country we were in. On a certain plain we made ready twelve carts and fled away across the open country. Mirza Turuk searched and could not find us. He thought: 'I must search for the tracks of twelve carts.' However, as we drove the twelve carts one behind the other, we made only one track, and so he never found us." The local Moslem population is very small[1] and confined to one or two villages of weavers and cultivators, who are themselves deeply affected by the Hindu environment. No doubt the story is very different in those districts of Northern Bengal where the Moslems predominate, but even there the great dissimilarity between Moslem and Santal culture probably militates against influences passing from the one to the other.

Christian influence, the result of a sustained and conscious effort on the part of missions, is considered later. Of deliberate efforts to Hinduize the religious practices and beliefs of the Santals the area is ignorant.

Note to Chapter 2

The relation of the aboriginal peoples to Hindu society has given rise to much controversy and discussion in India, not all of which is conducted in a spirit of scientific inquiry. An able presentation of many of the facts dealt with in this and the previous chapter, together with much else, and written from the Hindu standpoint, can be found in *The Aborigines—"So-called"—and Their Future*, by G. S. Ghurye, Ph.D. (Cantab.), published by the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1943.

[1] The figures given for the local Moslem population in 1931 were as follows:

	Males	*Females*
Ranibandh Thana	438	190
Raipore Thana	358	278

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It is worth noticing how the number "twelve" recurs in the traditions. Periods of twelve years are mentioned and twelve clans are named. Santal tradition is unanimous in talking of twelve clans, but there is little agreement about the names of the twelve. Santals using the clan suffix Ḍonka are unknown at the present day; local tradition says that they have changed their clan because of the odium attached to the murder of a monkey and the fact that they were reputed by some to sacrifice and eat monkeys. The conjecture of the narrator that the Ḍonka took the name of Bhaduli cannot be accepted. Two families in the area are known to have adopted the name Bhaduli, but they are members of a sub-clan of the Mạrnḍi. One of the Bhaduli could relate little or nothing about the myths of his clan, but he remembered a song that celebrated an old quarrel between the Mạrnḍi and the Kisku in which the former are referred to as Bhaduli and the latter as Koinḍa. The Bhaduli observe the same taboos as the rest of the Mạrnḍi. P. O. Bodding gives the name of the lost clan as Bedea,[1] a title that is not known in the area. The great interest that Santals themselves take in the determination of these matters was well illustrated by a lively correspondence initiated by a number of educated Santals and carried on for some time during the year 1944 in the pages of the weekly paper *Pẹṛa Hoṛ*.[2]

The clans are exogamous and, with two exceptions, the members of one clan may marry a person belonging to any of the other clans. The first exception to the general rule prohibits a marriage between a Mạrnḍi and a Kisku because of the quarrel in which these two clans were involved. The second prohibits the marriage of a Ṭuḍu and a Besra. The story behind this taboo was thus related by a member of the Ṭuḍu clan: "All twelve kinds of Ṭuḍu were exceedingly fond of dancing and singing, and they used to dance twelve dances in a single night. Well, one day two of the Ṭuḍu made a plan. Across the river from where they lived some girls of the Besra clan were engaged every day in grinding rice, and the youths thought to themselves: 'Tonight we shall get them out to dance the whole night through.' When they reached the river they found that it was in flood, and so they began to wonder how they would be able to get across. They walked along the bank looking out carefully till at last they found a creeping plant that stretched right across the river, its roots being on this side, while it was

[1] *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. IV, p. 596.
[2] Official organ of the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches, Dumka.

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across the axe edge, then held it so that the blood should pour on to the parched rice, after which he flung away the body of the pigeon with his left hand and placed the severed head with the parched rice. The hen was sacrificed in exactly the same way. He then rose to his feet for the sacrifice of the goat. This was of necessity a more elaborate proceeding. A little way off from the shrine, to the south-west, there stood a "killing-post" with a cleft at its upper end. The goat's neck was forced into this cleft, and it was secured with rope. Its owner held the goat firmly, clasping its front legs and securing them by drawing them up and backward over the goat's back, and the priest severed the head with one quick stroke of the axe. Immediately and with great speed he took hold of both the head and the body, so that the blood might drop on to the parched rice. This completed the offerings for the day, and he gathered up the heads of the animals and his other possessions and took them away in a small basket.

This Sarenga shrine affords a good example of the way in which Hinduism can take over the customs and use the beliefs of those who are not, strictly speaking, within the fold, but in spite of the eclecticism here apparent there is a point beyond which the Santals of the village will not go in accommodating themselves to Hindu society. The *Mokor* festival at the end of *Pus* is celebrated by all the lower Hindu castes of the area as well as by the Santals, and at Sarenga it is accompanied by a gathering near this shrine, when many different people, including the Santals, take part in the stick dancing. On the other hand, in 1930 a proposal made by the local Hindus of influence roused great indignation and had to be abandoned. A Santal couple from the village who had previously been baptized were persuaded, as a result of a mission by an agent of the Arya Samaj, to renounce the Christian faith. It was proposed that they should undergo the *suddhi*, or purification ceremony, at the hands of the Arya missionary at Lokhon Manjhi's shrine. The Santals immediately announced that they would not recognize the validity of any such ceremony and that if it took place at their shrine they would cut down the tree and desecrate the shrine with their own hands. Many beliefs have grown up around the place. Binu of Tantidanga used to say that there were certainly times when the animals moved; he himself had twice seen them do so at the time of the *Pus* festival. He used to relate the local legend of how when Europeans had first tried to live at Sarenga they found

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CHAPTER 13

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

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When "Brother Noyes" in the year 1838 "came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle"[1] somewhere on the borders of Bengal and Orissa, a new factor was introduced in the history of the Santals. Those pioneer missionaries, American Baptists of the early nineteenth century, seem to have felt early the charm of the Santals. The following extract from the journal of Jeremiah Phillips for February 10, 1841, is typical of the attitude pervading the first reports: "Spent the morning in making up a vocabulary of Santal words. Obtained about 150 words. *P.M.* Hearing that there would be a large dance some three or four miles off, and as most of our villagers had gone, we determined to go also. On our way we overtook a company of men, women and children, dressed in their nicest cloths, singing and skipping about in the most delightful manner. On arriving at the spot, we found some six hundred people assembled in a circular enclosure, in the centre of which a few leaves of the *sarl* tree were placed upon some rough images of elephants, horses, crocodiles, etc. Around these were some two hundred women, while in the outer part of the circle a large company of musicians, followed by the men, were marching round at a varied pace, the weaker sex in the centre more leisurely. The scene was pleasant to witness; it is so seldom that we see anything like activity, that we delight to gaze even upon a dance. The highest bliss to which an Oriya aspires is to stuff himself till he can eat no more, and then lie down to sleep in the sun. This constitutes his happiness here, and in his opinion will constitute his happiness hereafter. But here appears to be a very different people. Wherever we have been, we have found the women mingling with the men, in their labours and in their recreations; and they do not appear to be considered inferior. The consequence is they look like human beings—they respect themselves."[2] The American Baptists at work in the Midnapore district of Bengal as well as in Orissa were the first to give the Santals some literature, and as soon as possible they developed an extensive system of primary educa-

[1] See Chapter 1, p. 3.

[2] This extract occurs in the Eighth Annual Report of the Freewill Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, read and accepted at the anniversary meeting at Topsham, New England, on October 7, 1841. Other passages also have been published in a paper entitled "Early Records concerning the Santals", *Man in India*, Vol. XXV, 1945, by the present writer. See also footnote 1 on page 4.

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tion without losing sight of their main objective, the presentation of the Christian Gospel. One of their missionaries wrote in 1865: "We have by no means lost sight of the all-important fact that secular education without heart culture is of very little consequence. Hence, we have ever made the spiritual instruction of the people as prominent as possible. . . ."[1]

The main missionary effort developed in the north after the tragic rebellion of Santals had directed public attention to their affairs. The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches published its Seventy-Fifth Annual Report in 1941 and reported a total community of over 25,000 Christians. This mission, with supporting committees in Norway, Denmark and America, grew out of the pioneer work of a remarkable Norwegian, Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, and his Danish companions, Mr. and Mrs. Boerresen. Resigning from the Gossner Lutheran Mission, they began work independently and established a mission station at Benagaria in 1867. Skrefsrud, who was in every sense a giant of a man, prepared an *Introduction to the Grammar of the Santali Language*, which was published in 1873. It is to his enthusiasm and interest that we owe the account of the Santal traditions published in Santali in 1887. His linguistic work was carried forward and developed by the great scholar P. O. Bodding. To their efforts more than to any other cause the Santals owe the fact that Santali has developed a literature. The first efforts of the missionaries were aimed at providing the scriptures, song books and reading primers, for which purpose the Roman script was adapted, but a great stimulus to the study by the Santals of their own institutions was provided by the publication of the traditions.[2] This mission also publishes the only Santali periodical, which is now in its twenty-sixth year. Other societies that have made notable contributions to missionary work in the Santal Parganas and neighbouring areas are the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland, the latter being particularly noted for the excellent service of medical missionaries at Bamdah. The Santal members of the different Church bodies are brought together in the meetings of the Santal Christian Council, a body that was established in 1934 and is the only organization of any kind that brings together Santals

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[1] Stacy, *Life of Otis Robinson Backeler*, p. 318, quoted from *Primary Education among Santals of Midnapore*, 1931, A Survey with Proposals, by Lewis Clayton Kitchen, Calcutta.

[2] *Mare Hapramko reak' Katha*, Dumka (1st ed., 1887). An English translation by P. O. Bodding was published in Oslo in 1942, entitled *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*.

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from different provinces in India for mutual consultation. Through the influence exercised by its members in their several localities it has done not a little to heighten the community consciousness of the Santals in many places. [793] [794]

One of the constituent bodies of the Santal Christian Council has been at work among the Santals of the Bankura district for about sixty years. Before that date the American missionaries based on Midnapore made long tours which included the south-western areas of the Bankura district, but they would seem to have had little effect on the lives of the people. After the Methodist mission was established in the headquarters town of the Bankura district, the Americans withdrew and missionaries from Bankura began to tour the same area. Little progress was made until after the mission stationed its first missionary at Sarenga in the year 1888, though the first Santal converts were baptized near the town of Bishnupur. The missions established among the Santals are all evangelistic in intention. Their agents not only proclaim the Gospel, but they do so in the hope that non-Christians will accept the Christian Faith in Baptism and enter into the membership of the Christian Church. In the Bankura district the number of Santals who have responded to the preaching in this manner is not much more than a thousand. Although progress has been relatively more rapid in some areas than in others, it remains true everywhere that only a small proportion of the Santals has entered the Christian Church; on the other hand, in comparison with the non-Christian communities who are their immediate neighbours, the Santals have proved responsive. By describing here some aspects of the work in the Bankura district with which I have been intimately associated I do not wish to convey the impression that what is true for one area is true for all. In fact, it is impossible that such should be the case. Many factors make for differences. The Christian Church among the Santals is of greater age and maturity in some places than in others; in some areas work has been concentrated almost exclusively with Santals in view, whereas elsewhere it has formed one among many activities of the mission in question. The various traditions from which the missionaries, and in particular the pioneer missionaries sprang, made for differences in emphasis and attitude towards Santal institutions and culture. Nevertheless, it is my belief that the description of a local situation in the context of the Santal culture of the area may help to throw some light on the general problem of missionary work among the Santals.

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• 797 648 The missionaries at Sarenga became familiar at a very early stage with the facts of exploitation of the Santals. One result of this is that missionaries have been foremost in bringing and keeping the facts before the notice of the authorities. The evidence of missionaries is recorded in McAlpin's report.[1] Further direct measures have been taken to better the condition of the Santals both as tenants and as cultivators. During the period when the law was of little use as a safeguard of the rights of cultivators it seemed that the only way in which they could be helped was by acquiring landlord rights over the Santals and so assuring them of a square deal. In the Santal Parganas and elsewhere the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches has acquired a large *zemindari*, or estate, which includes a tea estate in Assam, as many of the Santals in its area migrated to the tea gardens. At Sarenga during the twenty years following the establishing of the mission, landlord rights in a number of small properties on which there were Santal tenants were acquired in order to save the Santals from eviction or from having to pay greatly enhanced rents. A later generation of missionaries has frequently had cause to wish that it could be freed from the burden of these commitments, but it is difficult to see how they could have been avoided if the people were to be helped in the one matter which affected their living more than any other. Though the situation today is very different, the tradition then established still leads Santals to look to the Christian Church for advice and protection. "As the hot season proceeded", we read in one report, "the hunger situation became serious for many people. We were occupied with building work in the compound and a young men's confirmation class which we had for some weeks, but our thoughts were also taken up with the problem of getting famine relief of some kind or other. And anxiously looking for some efforts to be made by government to meet the tremendous need, we finally got information about the loan arrangement (the Land Improvement Loan Fund) advancing money for buying seed and thus giving hopes of a harvest the following autumn. Before the rains started this loan money was realized from the police stations, and every landowner was supposed to have a chance to receive some. But just returning from the hills we had the Santals coming into the compound in large numbers every day complaining that they were refused the loan help. After much consultation a deputation of some elected villagers

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[1] M. C. McAlpin, *A Report on the Condition of the Santals in the Districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore*, Bengal Government, 1909.

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was sent to the Sub-Divisional Officer with a petition. The result was negative. After still more deliberation we went to Dumka and with our Secretary's help placed the petition before the Deputy Commissioner. This was immediately granted. A few days after this nearly two thousand more of the population in this area, 80 per cent. of which is stated to be Santals, got their little share of the promised loan."[1]

At Sarenga as elsewhere the necessary preoccupation with the problem of daily bread led to other developments in policy. In addition to becoming a landlord the mission also became a cultivator and employer of labour, thus being in a position to introduce improvements in farming methods to the people in a practical manner and not merely by preaching. Furthermore, something had to be done about the problem of debt that was crippling the Santals. Loans were granted to individuals, and in this matter, too, a later generation of missionaries, which is wise after the event, is inclined to question the wisdom of what was done. An attempt was made in the early years to give loans to cultivators at reasonable rates of interest through the organization of a grain bank, but most of the beneficiaries, unaccustomed to any but the most overbearing and unscrupulous behaviour from their moneylenders in the past, did not see the urgency of loan repayment, and in later years there has been an attempt to establish co-operatives on a sounder basis. Some of the loans given in the early years in order to save land for a family were on a scale that a subsequent generation that has had to try to realize them can only regard as inordinately lavish. The need for this kind of help has been greatly diminished since protective legislation came into force.

If missionaries were compelled to work for economic justice often against their will, they found other spheres open to them which they were eager to enter. Everywhere they have been the pioneers of education for the Santals; until recently they were almost the only agencies in the field. In the district of Midnapore the American Baptist Mission has, by a delegation of authority by the government, been almost solely responsible for the administration of funds and the supervision of schools. These range from the village primary school with a single teacher to a Santal High School for boys where they may sit for the matriculation examination of Calcutta University. In the Bankura district a missionary has always been a member of the Santal Education

[1] *The Seventy-Fifth Annual Report of the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches, 1941*, pp. 46–47.

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Board of the district, and from the beginning the mission sought to establish primary schools in the villages. Openings were found in centres either where some people had been baptized or where some of the influential villagers desired to see a school for the education of their children. The early period corresponded with an awareness, at least among a section of the Santals, that their boys should learn to read and write in order to be able to protect themselves; they were frequently discouraged by caste Hindus, most of whom in country areas may have felt quite sincerely that they were actuated by the highest motives. An old Santal related: "The *Deko* say to us, 'You cow-eaters, if you learn to read and write you will go blind', and many of our people, being simple, believe them." And so they turned readily to the missions who wished them to be educated. The government also found it convenient to rely on the help of missions and has made extensive educational work possible through grants. In the Bankura district Santal children can pass from their village schools to middle schools at Sarenga, and some have subsequently been able to go to High School and a mission College in the district town. At Sarenga a training school for village teachers trains the young men who staff the primary schools of the area. In spite of these efforts there has been disappointingly small progress towards literacy among the Santals. They remain largely indifferent to the type of education provided, for even in the remotest village the idea that the village school is merely a stepping-stone to further education has become deep rooted, and so the majority of the villagers cannot discover that the school is relevant to their needs. It is thought sufficient if two or three of the villagers are literate, for they can be relied on to help their illiterate companions. In the Bankura district the number of non-Christian girls who have attended the schools is very small, and none at all have so far attended the boarding school at Sarenga, although Christian and non-Christian boys mingle happily in the boys' school.

Medical work has likewise been prominent. The churches, which report to the Santal Christian Council, are responsible for seven general hospitals, five leper hospitals and a number of clinics. At Sarenga the arrival of a doctor in 1914 heralded the development of a hospital that now occupies a commanding site and brings healing to many thousands of patients, both Santal and non-Santal, every year. It is the centre of a nurses' training school where a number of Santal girls have qualified as trained nurses. While the hospital receives as many patients as can be

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dealt with, it is probable that the chief limitation to its usefulness is still to be found in the ideas of the people, who regard it too often as a last resort. A further handicap is that it is a great upheaval in the life of a family if they have to take a patient to hospital, involving themselves in severe economic loss. Nevertheless, the influence of the hospital grows steadily and chiefly by the advocacy of those who have themselves been patients.

One significant movement of reform within the Santal community showed clearly how the influence of missions has been working. It was an apparently spontaneous movement among the Santals of Midnapore and Bankura, but it coincided with a period of nationalist activity in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930, from which the Santals held aloof. In spite of their detachment, they were ripe to listen to propaganda. In the Sarenga area the three most prominent leaders had all received their education at the boys' boarding school and they had subsequently been trained there as village school teachers. At the time none of them was a Christian and neither in public nor in private did they indicate that their thoughts had ever turned towards accepting the Christian faith. These three men gathered round them a small band of helpers who, with great enthusiasm and at considerable sacrifice, went round the countryside and summoned mass meetings of the Santals to hear them. At some of the gatherings the missionary at Sarenga was invited to preside and to speak, largely it seemed because they were anxious for the government to realize that the movement was in no way directed against established authority. They urged the following reforms: firstly, a general tightening of the authority of the village officials in order to safeguard the basis of family life and reduce the number of broken marriages--the officials were urged to set the tone of Santal life by their example; secondly, abstention from drinking spirits and from drinking rice beer, except for ritual purposes and at festivals; thirdly, the prohibition of the large gatherings where women danced in public so that many Hindus gathered to watch them. Dancing should be carried on only in their own villages. This modest programme roused considerable excitement and opposition. The reformers discovered that the elders did not like to be told what was their duty, and the mass of unthinking youths became resentful. For the most part the reformers relied on persuasion, and at several meetings they succeeded in having resolutions passed in favour of the reforms. They were goaded into direct action when they saw that in spite of resolutions public opinion did not favour the

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cancellation of the great Lakshmi Puja gathering at Sarenga. They put out pickets and for one year by this means they secured its abandonment; the following year it took place with small numbers attending, which have since increased. The one permanent memorial of the movement, however, is in connection with this gathering, for whereas formerly it used to continue throughout the night, it now starts earlier in the day and the crowds disperse as evening comes on. In every other respect the reformers were disappointed. Two of the three leaders became disillusioned about the possibility of reform from within; their teaching took on a new note. One of them in a speech pointed to the example of the Karen people of Burma of whom he had been reading, and in due course these two presented themselves for Baptism.

The proposed reforms were "puritan" in character. There was nothing specifically Christian about them, and indeed they were exactly similar to those advocated by many movements among Santals and others that have been influenced by Hinduism. A dislike of puritanism is one of the reasons why Christianity has not made more headway. Santals frequently object that when they become Christian they have to give up their *raska*. An old preacher wrote: "It would be good if people kept their daughters at home, for then dancing at festivals would come to an end and words of religion could enter people's ears and stick. I have visited many villages and still do so. Folk do not wish to enter the new Way because they will have to give up sin. They say: 'Yes, religion is good, but there is no pleasure in it. There is no joy apart from drinking beer and spirits; whether at births or marriages there could be no jollification.'" Unlike some other missions, we in Bankura have not asked for a pledge of total abstinence as a prerequisite of Baptism, but in practice many of the Christians tend to talk as though drunkenness is the greatest sin as it is certainly the most conspicuous failing of the Santals. Apart from the rights and wrongs of total abstinence propaganda among primitive people, Christians are normally debarred from sharing in the village festivals that afford the chief opportunities of communal revelry with its accompaniments of drinking and dancing. Although there has never been any preaching against dancing in the area, its association with the festivals and the tribal cult is sufficient to discourage it among the Christians. It is not surprising, therefore, that the lives of the Christians, who are cut off from sharing in the traditional manifestations of tribal rejoicing, appear colourless to the heathen

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Santal, who is not friendly disposed towards puritanism in any shape or form.

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Another type of objection to Christianity arises out of what may be termed the "marginal teaching", largely unintended, of those who propagate the faith. "I shall never become a Christian", said an old man. "What should I do with a pair of shoes?" This remark was greeted with evident amusement on the part of the bystanders. He had been more impressed by the garb of the preachers than by their words. Many of the younger men and women of the Christian community drift away to employment in the towns, and when they return home they are not slow to display their superior material culture. Shoes, fountain-pens and wrist-watches are symbols of prosperity, and it is natural that in the Santal village they should at times be confused with the fruits of Christianity. The Santal who has no desire to change his lot or who sees no possibility of doing so is content with the old way of life.

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Undoubtedly the most deep-rooted objection, however, arises from the fact that the individual Santal knows of no security apart from his clan and tribe, and he sees in Christianity something that threatens to become a disintegrating influence. This awareness has developed its own mythology in beliefs which appear to the Christian missionary to be entirely without rational foundation and which seem to have been deliberately invented by persons maliciously disposed. What, for example, can be made of the commonly repeated assertion that the ritual of Baptism is accomplished by means that revolt the sensibilities of Santals, such as the transfer of spittle from the mouth of the officiating minister to that of the convert? Yet it is likely that the stories have grown without deliberate intent. Santals affirm that mixed marriages are actively encouraged by Christians. This belief, though mistaken, is not without foundation. One of the early converts related that he held back because he was not married. According to his own account he had some difficulty in making the missionary understand his attitude, for if he had married after Baptism the only alternatives before him would have been to marry someone who was related to him or to marry a non-Santal, and quite naturally he could bring himself to do neither. The most usual response to the appeal of the preacher is expressed in the words: "Yes, your religion is good and some day we shall all become Christians: but—we shall wait until all of us can do it together." Less commonly one hears the reply: "If the headman became a Christian, all in this village would do so."

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797 798 621 626 The attitude of the community towards the family or the individual who has become Christian is a complex of tolerance and incomprehension. Becoming a Christian is not in itself an offence for which there is an established penalty in tribal custom: the village council does not act and there is no formal outcasting of the offender from the community as there is, for example, when a Santal has married outside the tribe. The denial of tobacco and drinking water, two of the common manifestations of "separateness", are rarely used in the area, though sometimes found elsewhere. Thus, in the early days of the mission at Benagaria, Skrefsrud found that Christian converts were being cut off from social intercourse; by a process that sounds very like intimidation he invited all the leading Santals of the neighbourhood to a feast with the converts and informed them that having eaten with the converts they must now receive them back into the tribe.[1] Where social ostracism does occur it does not last long. There is rarely any need for a family to change their residence on becoming Christian so far as their fellow villagers are concerned, though some Christians do so because there are occasions when an isolated Christian family is put to grave inconvenience. This is particularly the case when a death occurs, for [164] the non-Christians will have nothing whatever to do with the disposal of a corpse after the strange manner of the Christians. Such predicaments occur only when the degree of isolation is great. With the individual convert it happens sometimes that he has to eat his meals separately from the rest of the family [152] for a time. It is served to him out in the courtyard rather than on the verandah or in the house, but this signifies contempt rather than any other emotion and it does not last. Sometimes the members of the family show signs of genuine grief. There is no [582] reason, from a Santal point of view, why non-Christian Santals should not marry Christians, although such marriages are not popular. The chief discouragement to them and the only discipline against them is exercised from the Christian side. And while relations between a convert and his kinsfolk and distant relatives do become strained, the old friendly relations are often resumed and it is customary for Christians to pay visits to the homes of non-Christian relations and *vice versa*. No attempt is made to dispossess or disinherit Christians who continue to enjoy the fruits of their toil in the fields.

797 798 [127] This tolerance of Christians in the midst alongside the dis-

[1] My authority for this statement is a small life of Skrefsrud in Santali, published by the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches.

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approval of much in the Christian message is perhaps due to the fact that Santal society is not sufficiently aware of danger. In the area, very few conversions of village officials have taken place. During the first decade of the present century a *parganath* with his family became Christian, and the reports of the time speak of hoping that his example would be followed by many others. In fact the Church has made practically no progress in that *pargana* since; a brother of the convert became *parganath* in his place. In a more recent example which occured in 1940 in the Midnapore district, a baptized *parganath* retained his office, but his example in becoming Christian was not followed. The only cases of village headman and village priest accepting Baptism have occurred in one village where the mission had become landlord. The large majority of converts have come from the rank and file of Santal society.

Individual religious experience plays a comparatively insignificant part in the first approach of the Santal to the Christian faith, though it is a strong motive in isolated cases. Dosoroth Hāsdāk', baptized in 1916 at about the age of thirty-five, was such a case. During the years when the mission was in its infancy he was growing up in a small village eighteen miles from Sarenga. He was sent to a village school by his father, and his first knowledge of Christianity was gained when he sat for the final examination, and this knowledge supplied him with a faith at a later crisis in his life to take the place of his former belief in the spirits. Here are his own words: "From that time (when he had gone to sit for an examination) I used to question in my mind the customs of the Santals. For a long time I went on drinking and dancing and I used to reverence the spirits in tree stumps, stones and trees, but all the time with growing dissatisfaction. As my sins increased, the Heavenly Father led me into more and more temptation and trouble. Two boys and two girls died at childbirth, and believing only in the spirits I ran to all the *ojhas* round about, but none could do anything. Then my wife and I talked together and decided that as the spirits had never been able to do anything we would no longer heed them but depend on God alone. So we tried to learn more about Him, and after awhile we heard of the mission at Sarenga. I went there a few times and got understanding; then I was baptized when Spencer Sahib paid his first visit to Samadi. From that time, believing in the One God and by His mercy, all my children and all of us have remained well."[1] Dosoroth died in 1940, being

[1] Quoted from a MS. in my possession written by Dosoroth at my request.

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bitten by a snake as he slept on his verandah one night. He did not rouse until it was too late to apply any effective remedy. His relatives who were present subsequently told a story of sublime self-command and faith. He bade them farewell: "Do not be concerned about me, but always believe in God; although my body is being destroyed, my spirit cannot be destroyed. And follow the example of my brothers and myself, who never had a quarrel." He read to them from his New Testament. In the words of a nephew who wrote me a letter shortly afterwards: "Many people came from round about when they heard of his death to show their grief. My uncle preached the name of Jesus right up to the time of his death."

Dosoroth ascribed his freedom from the molestation of spirits to his belief in the One God. The heathen Santal considers that the process of transferring allegiance from one to the other is fraught with grave dangers. Christians put themselves beyond the pale of the tribe and so they do on the whole escape from the attention of the malevolent powers to whom Santals as a whole are subject, but when a recent convert meets with misfortune it is because the spirits have been able to get at him. A young man in Barikul died from typhoid about six months after his Baptism, and the common verdict was that the *boingas* had taken their revenge.

Many of the early converts were first drawn to the Church in order to gain some freedom from oppression. From time to time examples occur of people who wish to escape trouble which they have reason to fear from their own people. Families have been baptized when the mother has been accused of witchcraft and they have been persecuted accordingly. In the early period a family became Christian through the man having married a cousin. Although cross cousin marriages are not entirely prohibited, they are frowned upon as they serve to complicate relationships. This couple were subjected to local persecution, and at one stage, I am told, they feasted their fellow villagers in an effort to be reinstated in society. Ultimately, however, they sought the refuge of the Christian community. Their home was within two miles of Sarenga and so they were near to other Christians. Others sought relief from harassing landlords and their agents. They thought that the right way to deserve the help of the missionaries was to do first what the missionaries asked them to do in matters of religion. For although missionaries did relieve much distress, they proclaimed that what they really wanted to see was a change of heart in the people. There

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has always been a danger when we wish to afford relief to individual cases that we should take as a criterion the attitude of the individual to Christianity, for there has to be some line of demarkation when it is physically impossible to help all who are in need. It may be that in some instances Santals concealed their real motives and pretended to a religious feeling that they did not possess, but if so, such cases were rare. When I first lived in the area it was still common for people to come to the mission house with their financial and land troubles in the hope of obtaining help, and not infrequently they offered to become Christians if it was my wish.

Many became Christian as a result of their first contact with Christian teaching in school. Birsingh Hembrom became a Christian when he was about thirty. His first wife had borne him no children and so his father had arranged for him a second marriage, and he was unable to enter the Church until the issues raised by his bigamy had been settled. Fortunately, perhaps, in his case, his first wife left him and returned to her own home when she heard talk of his becoming Christian. But like many others he used to say: "I knew Jesus for what He was from before my marriage because I had been in the hostel for four or five years and we used to study the Bible for an hour every day." One of the three leaders of the reform movement in 1930 was Dubraj Marndi, who has since died of tuberculosis. His approach to the faith was that of a thoughtful nature which weighs every step. He said once in my hearing: "I have been puzzled by the fact that in this country (area) God is saving the Santals and not the others. We are only rat-eating drunkards. But He is doing it because if others see that He can save us it will show His glory in a way that would not otherwise be possible."

The great difference between the first period of mission activity and following stages is the existence of a Christian community. A community of Christian Santals with a social life of their own introduces a new factor into the situation. The influence of kinsfolk which often serves to hinder a person from entering the Church now operates at times in the opposite direction. "We have seen that our cousins in such and such a village are happy", say inquirers, "and we want to join them." On one occasion when a Christian was urging his non-Christian relatives to follow his example he received the reply: "All right, nephew; where the head goes the tail will follow." If in some of its aspects the social life of the Santal Christian community places a stumbling-block in the way of the non-Christians, it also acts as

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• 797 the most influential attracting force. Converts today do not have to step out into the unknown as the first converts did. Cutting themselves off, as they must, from many aspects of their old community life, they find themselves not alone but members of a new community.

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794 177 178 158 The second main factor in producing tension is that the Christian becomes a member of a community that is different from the tribal community into which he was born and different from any other within his experience. He may know of one or two Santals who have been influenced by the Bengal form of Vaishnavism and have adopted some strange customs in consequence, and he is familiar with the semi-secret society formed by the *ojha* and his disciples, but neither of these provides any analogy with the society of which he now becomes a member.

794 797 177 178 152 The preaching of the Christian Faith has been pioneered by European missionaries, and up to the present the direction of the affairs of the Christian Church has remained in the hands of missionaries to a greater extent than in many other parts of India. Their apparent superiority tends to make the village Christian belittle his own ideas and institutions. Their superior wealth and beneficence tempt him to rely on their help, and sometimes produce resentment when the help is withheld for a reason which he is quite unable to appreciate, the desire to make him "independent". Furthermore, Santal Christians are linked through the Church with Christians who come from other communities. This fusion of diverse elements produces strain at times. There has been no difficulty from the first in taking common meals, and this has safeguarded the witness of the Sacrament of Holy Communion to the unity of believers in Christ. On the other hand, many Christians shrink from contact with the corpse of a non-Santal Christian. Near the village of Samadi there used to be one household of Christians who were of Bhuiya stock. I was on tour in the area when the old grandmother died. She was buried in the Christian burial ground, here, as in most villages, a piece of waste-land within the holding of one of the Santal Christians, but none of the local Santal Christians would touch the corpse. The persistence of such ideas varies, one might say, in inverse proportion to the degree of contact which the local community enjoys with other Christians. Samadi is in a far corner of the area and such an incident would not occur nearer to the centre. This can be further illustrated by the fusion that has been gradually taking place in the Christian community through intermarriage. Although the village Christian abhors the thought of intermarriage, a few individuals have ignored the rule of tribal endogamy and have contracted marriages against which there are no Christian sanctions. Those who have done so would not find it possible to continue to live in the village community, and

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THE NEW COMMUNITY

a new symbolism and is fostered by a new ritual. The central act of corporate worship on Sunday, springing from a tradition that is more sabbatarian than sacramental, has taken hold of the imagination of the people. Babulal describes the visit of a missionary to Barikul on a Sunday: "At about two in the afternoon the bell sounded for the Christians to praise the Holy Name of the Heavenly Father. Everyone knew that our *mañjhi haṛam*[1] had arrived, or the bell would not have been sounded so early. A second bell followed according to custom. All the Christians gathered, and first as we entered the church we prayed in our minds for strength. The *mañjhi haṛam* read out a song and we all sang it together, after which we all knelt and followed his prayer. When there was something in the prayer with which we heartily agreed we said to ourselves: 'Heavenly Father, let it be!' Then we heard the Sixteenth Chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, and from it he spoke many words for strengthening us and gave us good advice. At the end we sang again and after prayers we came out of the church. As we stood on the verandah we greeted the *mañjhi haṛam* and had sweet conversation together. He asked some of us elders a few questions: 'What is the state of mind of the villagers? Why do they not accept Jesus?' He also asked: 'What is the state of the evening daily prayers in the village and how goes the Class Meeting?'[2] We told him: 'The people of the village are only drunkards, and as to that we are also at fault, for we have had one or two drunkards amongst us and we have not tried to work hard for Jesus Christ. As for the second thing, evening prayers are being held in a different house each evening; it is not possible for us all to gather every evening. The Class Meeting is going very well. We are hoping that by its influence we shall be able to get rid of drinking and other evils amongst us. We have made a rule amongst ourselves about drinking. If anyone is found drinking we shall fine him five *siki*.[3] If it happens three times we shall fine him five rupees. Then if he continues we shall bring it to the notice of our *marañ nacke* or *mañjhi haṛam* and drive him out from us. We shall not sit with him no matter what he wishes to do, whether at a birth or *chaṭiar* or marriage; nor shall we go to his house. Then we shall be

[1] Babulal uses a curious phrase here for the missionary. It is not in general use. Literally the "old headman" or "chief headman", the term is in general use to designate the original founder of a village. A missionary is generally *padri Sahib*.

[2] This Methodist term occurs in the manuscript. It is familiar to the community.

[3] A *siki* is equivalent to four annas.

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[The Santal Christian Community]

794 797 able to drive out all evil from amongst us and the work of Jesus Christ will progress.'"

794 533 In some parts of the Santal Church many of the hymns sung are translations of ancient and other Christian hymns set to western melodies, but in this area nearly all the hymns are the product of the community. In the hymnbook now in use[1] there are one hundred and forty hymns, of which one hundred and twenty are original compositions of Christians in the area. Half the remaining twenty have been borrowed from Santali hymnbooks published elsewhere. All these have been set to folk-melodies, and the book is a best seller at markets and fairs through the whole area. The words show clearly the stamp of their environment and at the same time they are full of biblical imagery:

[539]

Come, come, merciful Jesus,
Come, come, to the house of my mind.
Seeing Thee, in a moment of time
My mind breaks up.

Life Thou art and Truth,
And the True Way art Thou,
Help of the helpless, Jesus,
That is why I seek Thee.

Among sweet-scented flowers Thou the parrot,
A dark jewel art Thou.
In whose mind Thou art the jewel
He alone is truly rich.[2]

In one hymn Jesus the teacher of the Truth is likened to the bright evening star in the night sky. In another they sing:

[539]

The star of morning has risen and shines,
The gentle morning breeze is blowing,
The day of salvation has come to us.[3]

Some of the hymns owe not a little to the fact that the writer knew hymns in Bengali or more remotely in English, but the sentiments have been popularized by being set to Santal melodies. One of the most popular of the evening hymns, set to a [539] haunting melody belonging to the *herhet'* or weeding songs, is

[1] *Dhorom Sevek Puthi*, 3rd ed., Sarenga, 1936.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 28. [3] See Appendix B, No. 29.